



How Vietnam as a travel destination is perceived in Finland

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<p>Abstract:</p> <p>The thesis is a qualitative study of the perception of Vietnam among Finnish tourists. The study addresses two main research questions: How do Finns perceive Vietnam as a travel destination and what are challenges Vietnam needs to address to attract more Finns. The theories of research explore the concept of Push and Pull factors, Tourist Career Ladder, Destination Personality. Through semi-structured interviews with three experts working in Travel Agencies in Finland and Vietnam, the study encourages discussions on the perceived images of Vietnam, the top attributes that Finnish tourists expect from the destination, and the challenges Vietnam has been facing. The results indicate that there has been a growing interest in Vietnam among Finns. Vietnam is seen among Finnish travelers as a young and new destination with the biggest pull factors are its nature (beach in particular), weather, food, and culture. The popularity of all-inclusive-resorts (AIRs) that provide inclusive stay with a high standard of hygiene and safety were commonly seen among interviewees answers, which confirms the destination's attributes are affected a great deal by what the tourists are looking for. Thailand is a direct competitor of Vietnam due to its well-established presence in Finland, well-developed tourism ecosystem, and easy accessibility was frequently brought up by interviewees. The empirical data confirms that Viet Nam could see itself belonging, but not limited, to Brand Personality categories of Sincerity and Excitement. At the time this thesis is written, the world is going through a global pandemic that put a sad pause on the entire tourism industry, the interviewees of this study expressed that safety will be the keyword in the future. How the destinations face pandemic situations is a significant attribute when tourists making their choice of destination. Improvements</p>	

and efforts need to be made by Vietnam destination governments and DMOs regarding the destination's accessibility, such as the frequency, length, and price of flights. The need to develop different attributes that cater to the needs of a different group of tourists is consistent with the theory of push and pull factors.

The author recommends further research on Vietnam's return rate of tourists and exploring more on the concept of All-Inclusive-Resorts with its pros and cons to the destination. Future research should focus on the number of interviews and finding more relevant theories.

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FOREWORD

I would like to thank my friends and family, for the patience, unconditional support and motivation you have given me.

I would not be able to complete this thesis without my supervisor, Mia Halmén. I am grateful for your continuous support and guidance.

I would also like to thank the participants of this study, for their insights, kindness and enthusiasm.

2020 was a dark year for many, including myself. But I would like to believe it was also a chance to realize and treasure the presence of others in our life.

How precious it is to be able to breathe, to live, to be loved, supported, to have a walk outdoor, hold each others' hands and laugh carelessly, to be given time and chance to be still, be healed, and correct one's mistake.

I want to believe when the dark time is over, this world would be healed, and so are we.

Helsinki, May 2021

Trang Thach

1 INTRODUCTION

The author - as a Vietnamese student been living and studying in Finland - would like to somehow find a bridge to connect and strengthen possible relationships between Vietnam and Finland. Finland, as a very far away land that is renowned for its peace, safety, education, and happiness that ranks the third most prosperous country in the world (Legatum Institute, 2018), the safest country in the world (World Economic Forum, 2017) and the happiest country in the world. (Finland Convention Bureau, 2021), Finnish tourists might just be the golden poster child of an ideal tourist which many host destinations would want to attract. By contrast, Viet Nam with its tropical climate, exotic landscape, and richness in culture & cuisine has a lot to offer to modern Finns. The author herself got the inspiration from MATKA 2019 (Nordic Travel Fair) in Helsinki as a volunteer for the Vietnamese Embassy in Finland and has observed considerably great interest from the fair attendants to travel to Vietnam. Many of those have no idea about the 15 days visa exemption for a Finnish citizen, the concern about seasonal climate and necessary vaccines were also frequently bought on the table. However, food and nature seem to be a big pull factor to almost all the respective attendants. Hence, the author decided to conduct the study to have a deeper and fact-based knowledge about this matter in the hope to strengthen the image of Vietnam as a more obvious choice when Finnish tourists looking to travel to Asia in general and South East Asia in particular. On the other hand, with careful and throughout the investigation, this study could lead to further development of understanding of the Nordic tourism market as a whole and see how they perceive Vietnam as a travel destination. While this research is being written, the world and the world of tourism have been affected heavily by the global Corona pandemic and keeping this in mind, the author would also want to determine how does this affects the travel rhythm and behaviors of Finnish consumers.

1.1 Viet Nam

In April 1975, millions of Vietnamese people witnessed one of the most historical moments of their life – the communists had taken over Saigon and won the Vietnam war. Vietnam, since that day, has officially become an independent country. However, did not

open its door to international travelers up until late 1997. Within the last decade, this relatively "young" land which belongs to the South East Asia region, has been widely known as a nation that made its way through one of the toughest wars in the modern world has been experiencing a rapid demographic and social change. Vietnam is thriving from being one of the poorest countries on earth to being the 37th largest economy in the world (International Monetary Fund, 2020). With international tourists have been able to freely travel to Vietnam since 1997 and the booming economy from the strength and energy from many young people, it makes Vietnam become more well known in the Tourism world as a highly potential & fast-growing destination. World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2019) has reported Vietnam to be among the top 10 most visited countries in Asia. Its capital, Hanoi, has consistently ranked in the top 10 of the world destinations by TripAdvisor (CNN, 2016). Consequently, tourism has been and seems to be a very important, if not tremendous, component of Vietnam's economy. Its contribution has been steadily up to almost 10% of the country's GDP and was forecasted to grow up to 18.9% in 2030.

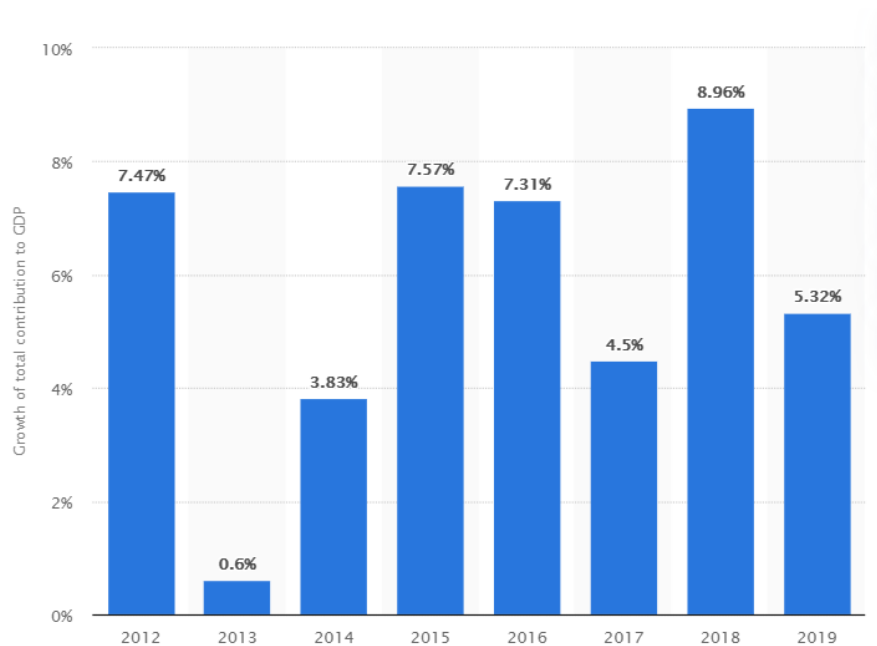


Figure 1 Growth of travel and tourism contribution to Vietnam GDP from 2012-2019

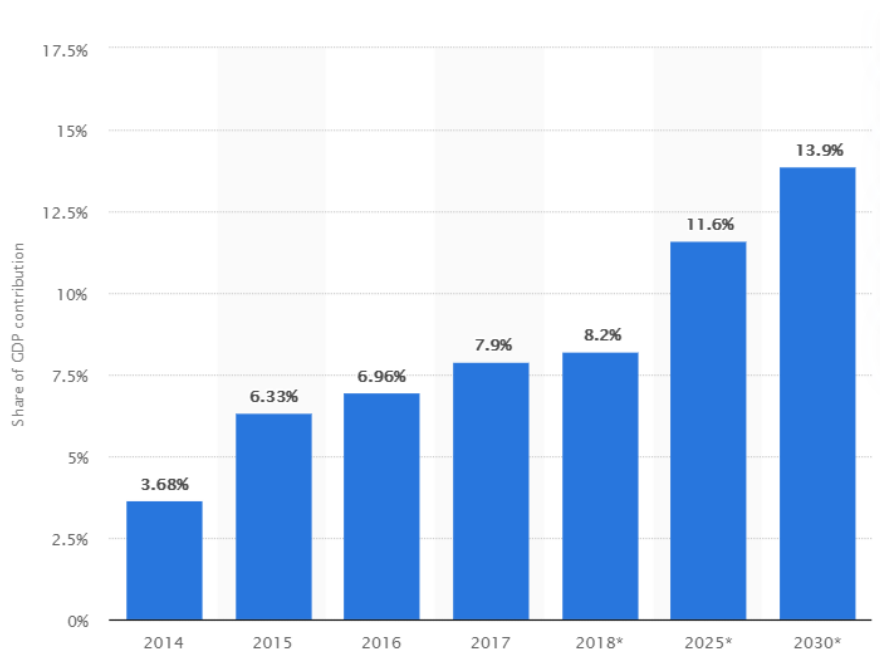


Figure 2 Share of direct GDP contribution from Tourism sector in Vietnam from 2014 to 2017 with forecast from 2018 to 2030.

In 2019, Vietnam received 18 million international arrivals which was an increase of 16.2% comparing to its previous year 2018 with around 15 million. 2018 saw a rise of 19.9% from 2017, and 2017 had 29.1% more visitors than 2016 (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2021).

In 2020, due to the Global Coronavirus Pandemic (World Health Organization, 2021), the world stood still, many lost their loved ones, own lives and job, deserted office buildings and streets, and the majority of nations closing their borders. The global tourism industry had suffered and faced major uncertainty and unavoidable visitors and revenue loss. Despite all of that, Vietnam has won the title of The World Leading Heritage Destination 2020 (World Travel Awards, 2021).

Finland and Vietnam's diplomatic relationship has been established in 1973 with a focus on key areas such as the water sector, forestry, technology, science, cleantech, and education (Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). Finnish education and way of life have been receiving positive attention and great interests in Vietnam with more and more Vietnamese students coming to Finland for their higher education such as the author herself,

making Vietnamese the highest population of international students in Finland constantly from 2015-2020 (Finnish Immigration Service, Tilastot — Maahanmuuttovirasto, 2020). The author considers this as a promising aspect because there is an advantage from the great relationship between Vietnam and Finland. As a Finnish citizen, one can travel to Vietnam without Visa for a maximum of 15 days (Vietnamese Embassy in Finland, 2020).

1.2 Tours from Finland

It is safe to say that majority of Nordic tourists in general and Finnish tourists in particular, generally favor warm and tropical destinations. It corresponds to the way tour operators in Finland advertising their Vietnam packages which are usually visually accompanied by images of beaches and sunny weather. Below are some tours for Finnish tourists obtained from the author's desk research in May 2021:

The screenshot shows a travel website for Vietnam. The main header includes navigation links: Yleistä, Matkakohteet, Hotellit, Tietoa, Yhdistelmäomat, Matkavinkit, and Retket. The main content area features a large image of a tropical beach with palm trees and lounge chairs. Below the image are buttons for 'Lisää kuvia' and 'Kartta'. A text box on the right of the image lists: 'Yhdistä kaupunki- ja rantaloma', 'Riisipelloja ja paratisirantoja', and 'Tutustu vietnamilaiseen keittiöön'. Below the image is a short paragraph in Finnish describing Vietnam as a popular destination. To the right is a sidebar with a dark blue background containing a menu with categories: Rantalomat, Kaupunkilomat, Risteilyt, Aktiivilomat, Lennot, and Temamatkat. Below the menu is a dropdown menu with options: MISTA, Helsinki, MIHIN, Kaikki maat, and MATKAKOHDE.

Figure 3 Advertisement of destination Vietnam (Apollo Matkat, 2021)

Vietnam



Vierävieräsuhteiden tunnetusta Vietnamista on viime aikoina tullut suosittu lomakohte. Tähän houkuttelevat kauniit, liidunvalkeat rannat, elämää viljevät suurikaupungit ja vihreät vuoret. Matka Vietnamiin koostuu ihania rannoista, hienosta kulttuurista, makuelämyksistä ja ystävällisestä ihmisistä.

Suosittu matkakohteet Vietnam



Lisätietoa matkakohteesta

Apollomatkojen lomalla Vietnamissa sinulla on mahdollisuus kokea niin ihanaa rantaelämää kuin suurikaupunkien elyettä.

Vietnamin kulttuuri on kiehtovaa, ja maan rikas historia näkyy kaikkialla monia kielten nähtävyyksien muodossa. Myös maan luonto on vertaansa vailla. Quang Nam:n provinssissa sijaitsee My Son, My Son, tempelikoonsaatu. Phong Nha-Kin kansallispuistossa sijaitsee maailman suurin luolasto, jonka sisällä olevien noin 126 metriä syvä. Vietnam jakeutuu maantieteellisesti kolmeen osaan: pohjoisosien vuoristoon, rantoihin ja trooppiseen viidakkoon. Maan eteläosaa hallitsee yksi maailman suurimmista joista, Mekong.

Phan Thiet

Phan Thiet on tyypillinen vietnamlainen rantakaupunki, jonka keskustassa on pieniä ravintoloita, punertavia hiekkadyynejä ja silminkatamattomien, Kaunilla Mul Ne Beachillä on hyvät mahdollisuudet herrastaa leija- tai purjelautailua. Phan Thietissä on [Näytä lisää](#)

Rantalomat	Kaupunkilomat	Risteilyt
Aktiivilomat	Lennot	Temamatkat
MISTA		
Helsinki		
MIIN		
Käikid maat		
MATKAKOHDE		
Käikid matkakohteet		
MATKANPITÄJÄ		
Vikoin matkat		
PÄIVÄMÄÄRÄ		
Su 27. kesäkuuta 2021		
MATKUSTAJAA		
2 aikuista		
HAE		

Figure 4 Advertisement of destination Vietnam (Apollo Matkat, 2021)

Saigon



Saigonissa on omanlaisen tunneima - pieniä putikkeja, katukauppilata ja ruokaköyjiä. Täällä voit kokea suurikaupungin, jossa on kaikkea: kulttuuria, makuelämyksiä ja upeita nähtävyyksiä. Läntee varmistamiseksi tai paketoi oma lomasi eksoottiseen Saigoniin.

Suosittu hotellit, Saigon



Lisätietoa matkakohteesta

Unohtumaton elämys viikissa suurikaupungissa

Saigonin ilmivälinä, eksoottiset tuoksu ja läinet nauttavat jo ensimmäisestä hetkestä lähtien. Saigon ei rauhoitu koskaan, samut ovat täynnä ihmisiä ja liikennettä, eikä paikallista nauttimassa samalla tavalla tuolella katuvuolissa. Itäisin useimmat lähtevät ulos viettämään aikaa ja kävelemään kaupungin viikasta katuja. Markkinoilla, kuten kuuluisilla Benh Tannin markkinoilla, voit tehdä hyvii löydyjä ja tullaistokkala.

Historiaa joka kadunkulmassa

Saigonin keskustan rakennukset ovat todista kaupungin tunnetusta historiasta. Cooperaton vieressä on historiallinen hotelli Continental, jossa Graham Greene kirjoitti kuuluisan teoksensa The Quiet American ja toisella puolella katua on Rex hotel, joka toimi ulkomaiden journalistien tukikohtana sodan aikana. Sotamuseo, War Remnants Museum, on käymisen arvoinen kohde Saigonissa.

Cu Chi -tunnolit [Näytä lisää](#)

Rantalomat	Kaupunkilomat	Risteilyt
Aktiivilomat	Lennot	Temamatkat
MISTA		
Helsinki		
MIIN		
Käikid maat		
MATKAKOHDE		
Käikid matkakohteet		
MATKANPITÄJÄ		
Vikoin matkat		
PÄIVÄMÄÄRÄ		
Su 27. kesäkuuta 2021		
MATKUSTAJAA		
2 aikuista		
HAE		

9,2 iostä Saigon
Asiakalidemme arvio, Perustuu 10 arvioon

Figure 5 Advertisement of destination Vietnam (Apollo Matkat, 2021)

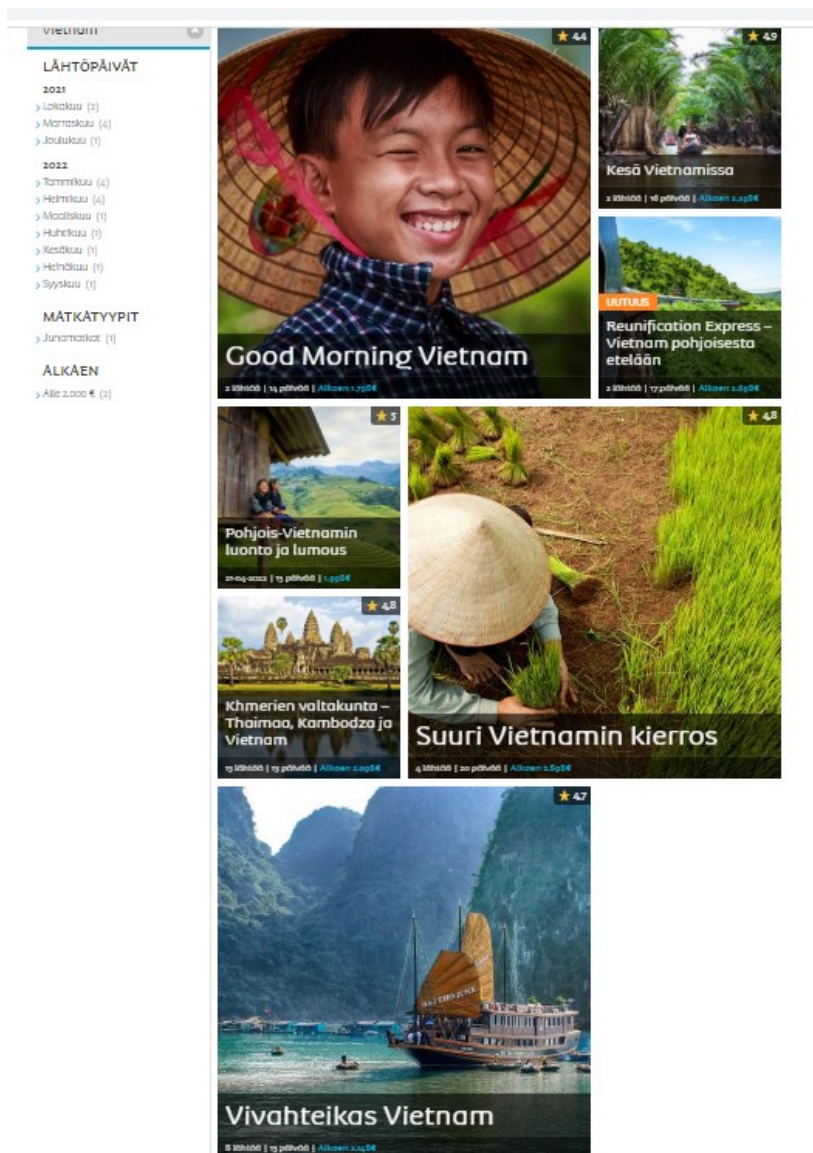


Figure 6 Other type of trips to Vietnam (Albatros Travel, 2021)

1.3 Research Aims

The objective of this thesis is to learn about the interests and perception of Finnish tourists towards Vietnam, and then explore what challenges the destination seems to be facing. The author is also interested in exploring and identifying possible changes in post-pandemic travel behavior by asking interviewees sub-questions regarding that topic. The author wants to understand what makes Finnish tourists choose Vietnam as a destination among other options in Asia and the South East Asia region and by doing so - what are their expectations towards Vietnam and do Vietnam's attributes correspond to that. It is

expected that this understanding could bring up some recommendations to improve the brand awareness and competitiveness of Vietnam as a destination towards tourists in general, and Finnish outbound tourists.

1.4 Research Questions

The two main research questions that need to be answered by this thesis are as follows:

- What are the perceptions of Vietnam as a travel destination?
- What are the challenges Vietnam needs to address to attract more Finnish tourists?

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical framework in this thesis include push and pull factor, destination personalities and travel career ladder. Other academic works have been mentioned for a better understanding of what has been known and what could be discovered more. Results from interviews that are later analyzed in the thesis are supported by the theoretical framework as secondary data. The theory of destination personality from Jennifer L. Aaker which has been applied in various marketing and branding projects of goods and services is considered to be appropriate to identify a personality of a Destination.

2.1 Destination Personality

Personality traits are not always just meant for the human beings. Yet as human beings, we project our feeling to a subject, a product, even a place as well. For example, why does Paris usually associate with romantic and fashionable, Italy is sassy, Japan is heroic and Canada is polite? Aaker (1997) has come up with a Brand personality scale (BPS) which defines brands into 5 dimensions: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness in which contains different traits. BPS is considered to be “the most comprehensive instrument for measuring brand or product personality” (Ekinici and Hosany, 2006).

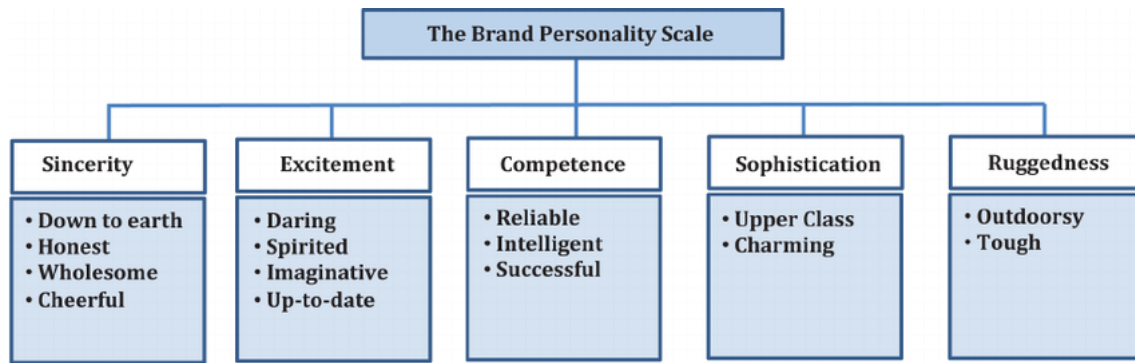


Figure 7 Aaker's five dimensions of Brand Personality (Aaker, 1997)

The 5 dimensions also include various traits that split among them: Sincerity (down to earth, family oriented, sincere, wholesome, original, cheerful, friendly), excitement (daring, exciting, spirited, imaginative, up to date, independent), competence (reliable, secure, intelligent, successful, confident, secure), sophistication (upper class, glamorous, good-looking), and ruggedness (outdoorsy, masculine, Western, tough, rugged). The above have mentioned the destination personality branding measurement, using human analogy to a destination, making it become not only a concept or a name anymore but rather a living thing with characteristics and traits. So, in that sense, the author would like to, for example, assume the current status of Vietnam belongs within Sincerity and Excitement dimensions, then the next step shall be to see if it is what the DMOs desire or not, and if not, they need to be able to describe what could be the desired future status and perhaps find a strategy to turn it into measurable results.

2.2 Unique Emotional Proposition

This next theory is a popular and is considered by the author to be helpful and practical as the next aligned step to Destination Personality: Everybody knows the popular marketing theory “Unique selling points” which refers to the characteristics of the host products or services that are benefit and appealing to the consumers and are not to be found anywhere else, or in another word. If we see the destination as a product or a service, there are many marketing theories that could be “borrowed” and reasonably applied to promote the destination itself just as well. In nowadays market, the competitions between different destinations and different regions within a continent call for a much more effort

for destinations to stand out and emphasize the uniqueness of the destination. Like said Unique selling points, the “emotional reactions and triggers are very influential on customer decisions” (Morgan, Pritchard and Pride, 2004). They also argue that “what persuades potential tourists to visit and return to one place instead of another is whether they have empathy with the destination and its values”. This has changed from the concept of the unique selling proposition (USP), rather, DMOs now must use a Unique Emotional Proposition (UEP) to differentiate themselves from the competition.

2.3 Push and Pull Factor

A well-known and widely accepted by many scholars in Tourism theory word is the Push and Pull Factor theory which was first introduced by Dann (1977). “Push factors are defined as internal motives or forces that cause tourists to seek activities to reduce their needs, while pull factors are destination generated forces and the knowledge that tourists hold about a destination” (Gnoth, 1997).

Earlier, in another word, “Push factors are considered important in initiating travel desire, while pull factors are considered more decisive in explaining destination choice” (Crompton, 1979). It is worthy also to note that Push and Pull does not always go together and could be applied on its own separately. At the same time, it is crucial to find out the correlation between push and pull factor and tourists behavior, in this case - during their destination choice process.

Pesonen, Komppula, Kronenberg and Peters (2011) studied the differences between Push and Pull factors by two separate experience in two rural areas within Tyrol and Finland. They found a significant differences and indication that what the tourists are looking for affecting a great deal to what attributes that the destination's attribute (its image and personality). It could be simply understood that somebody who is looking for a romantic and relaxing trip would not choose Beijing over Maldives, or somebody who priorities the exoticness and adventures would find those similar attributes in, for example, the Everest trip or the Alps trip rather than Milano city. We need to know Finnish's expectation & internal motivation (push factors) and evaluate Vietnam's own attributes and from then developing a strategy to match these two. Wen and Huang (2019) have also stated that it is recommended for emerging destinations to "delineate different tourist's groups" and

understand their travel motivation so that DMOs could "tailor strategies for specific tourist group".

It is a once in a lifetime experience for the author herself, and might be to many others, to live through a pandemic. During 2020, the world has been going through a global pandemic (World Health Organization, 2021) and though it is still too early to conclude on tourist behaviors being affected by this, yet one way or another, we know that something might change, for better or for worse. "*Safety*", more than ever, would be one of the top destination desired attributes. Even if we want it or not - the fear of contracting this new disease will subconsciously be in future tourist's mindset, and it could be possible that our very human's survivor instinct might come back stronger than ever to protect ourselves, hence also affecting our travel behaviors and leads to "less adventurous" near generation of tourists and tourism industry. The pandemic would eventually fade, and travel barriers will be lifted, yet some tourists' psyches will likely settle on a new equilibrium (Kock et al., 2020).

2.4 Tourist Career Ladders

Inspired by Maslow's need hierarchy, Pearce (2005) has developed further with Tourist Career Ladder which stated: "Overall results suggested that host-site-involvement motivation (e.g., experiencing different cultures) and nature-related motivation (e.g., being close to nature) were more important factors to the more experienced travelers, whereas motivations such as stimulation, personal development, relationship (security), self-actualization, nostalgia, romance, and recognition had a higher priority for the less experienced ones". In another word, an inexperienced traveler who never have been abroad before would be more likely to choose a group tour because of the Security feeling, but someone with experiences gained from their previous trip might feel the need to experience their well earn confidence, self-recognition, and independence.

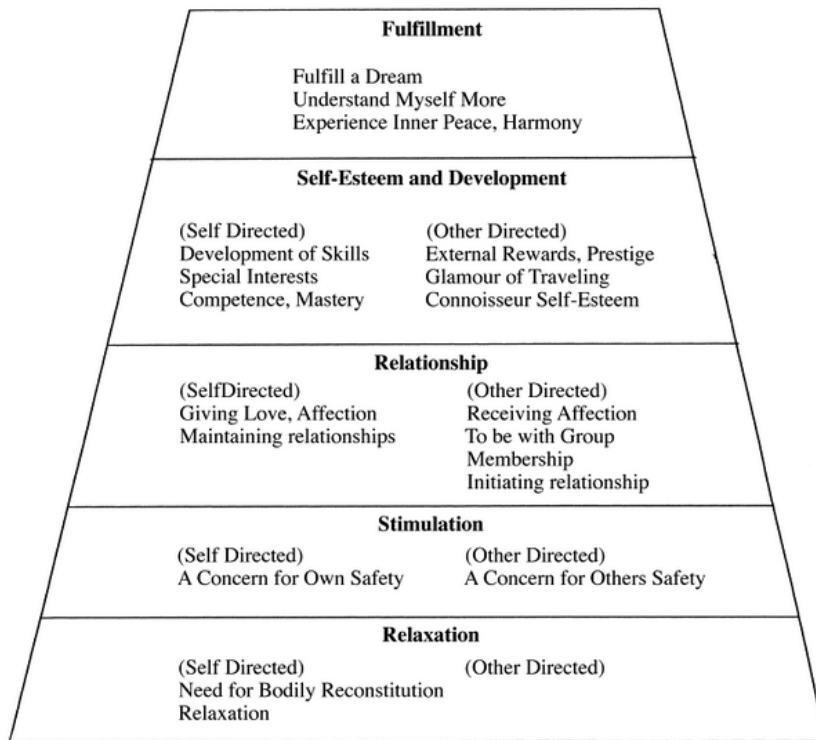


Figure 8 Travel Career Ladder (Ryan, 1998).

3 METHODS

Hammarberg, Kirkman and de Lacey (2016) has argued that Qualitative and Quantitative research methods often represent two different world view - in which Qualitative could be viewed with suspicion from quantitative point of view for its small sample size which might not represent the whole population and the likeliness of the researcher's own interpretation during the finding. On the other hand, quantitative method is sometimes seen as heading towards generalization, skipping human meaning and deep emotion.

The methods that are used in this study is Qualitative method and will be presented in this chapter, alongside with how data was collected, how data was analyzed alongside with the trustworthiness of the study.

3.1 Qualitative Research Method

With the Corona pandemic happening during this investigation, the author believes it is worth identifying and investigating the feelings and perceptions of the consumers now as there has not been enough sufficient knowledge of the consumer behavior post-COVID-19 pandemic to be able to draw up a passive questionnaire, therefore, an in-depth, semi-structured interview was conducted to help to understand the problem from insiders - in this case - the experts working in travel agencies who have the power of decision to design the "package" to travel to Asia and to Vietnam, planning to or have been working closely with Finnish tourists consumers that show interests in visiting Vietnam. Various points of view should help to answer to some extends, the limited picture of the current image of Vietnam among Finns.

The author chose to approach this research with an In-depth qualitative interview method. The in-depth interview method is a widely known concept with an open-ended approach that able to prevail deep opinions, attitudes and behavior from the interviewee's standpoint that could not be statistically measured nor counted. The reason for this choice of approach is that with an interview the author can also pick up from what the respondents have to say – a promising new direction or approach in an active way, then able to react and ask further into the matter.

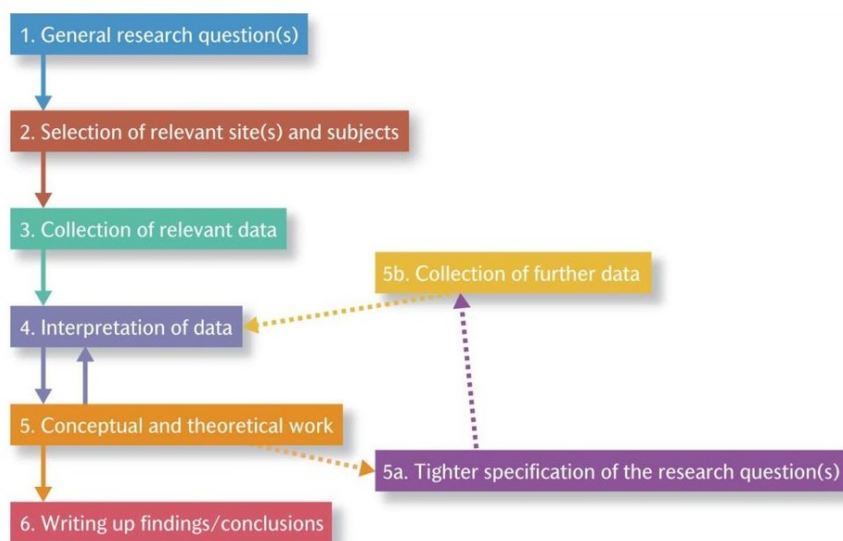


Figure 9 The main steps of Qualitative Research (Bryman and Bell, 2012)

The semi-structured interview has been chosen as the mainframe for it is "flexible, accessible and intelligible and, more important, capable of disclosing important and often hidden facets of human and organizational behavior" (Qu and Dumay, 2011). After identifying core research questions, carefully study other resources; theories, and works of literature related to the subject, the author continued with gathering data from one-on-one interviews with 3 different individuals who work in travel companies whose responsibilities related to Finnish tourists and Vietnam outbound tourism. These individuals work in different travel agency companies in Finland and Vietnam. Schedule and unscheduled probe techniques have been used to open more on sudden aspects that came up during the interviewee's responses. For example, the author sometimes asks the interviewees to elaborate on a certain point that they have mentioned earlier.

The author made a conscious choice to be highly alerted to what was going on in the conversation, there should be immediate reaction and follow-up to keep the interview going naturally and engaged. For that reason, it is very common that audio recording to be used in this type of method. Of course, with the acknowledgment and agreement beforehand from the interviewee(s). For this thesis, audio was adopted as a recording method. Before the interview, it was checked that the device was still in a good shape that was able to provide a smooth, non-corrupted operation.

3.2 Data Collection & Analysis

The criteria for selecting the interviewees were that they are in leadership, line management or expert positions of travel agency in either Finland or Vietnam, their work responsibilities are related to Finnish tourist consumers and Vietnam as a travel destination such as Customer Service, Marketing, Sales or Product Development. This is to make sure that there are enough insights for the research and interview questions. The possibility of anonymity and awareness of the interview being recorded, as well as an adequate time to consider their participants were given through the form of a consent form (see Appendix 3) and was verbally confirmed again at the beginning of each interview. The one-on-one qualitative interview were conducted through phone call or Microsoft Team with duration lasting from 30 - 40 minutes. Interviews happened between April and May 2021. It is

necessary to mention that virtual interview is not quite the same as interviewing face-to-face in person and that might have had some affects on the findings of this research.

Table 1 List of Participants

No.	Position	Company
Interviewee 1	Assistant to CEO	Son Trang Palvelut
Interviewee 2	General Manager	Eskept Travel
Interviewee 3	Marketing Manager	Apollo Matkat

The author contacted the participants through emails first to initiate the potential collaboration, stressing the legitimacy of the research by providing the author’s association with Arcada institution, thesis topic and its research questions along with the confidential nature of the research and the possible use of data. Then, suggesting a meeting schedule for a one-to-one virtual interview through Microsoft Team or phone call. The main theme of Finnish tourists and Vietnam as a destination has been given to the participants in advance of the interview.

Among the three interviews, two were conducted in English due to the common language between the author and the interviewees. When the Finnish interviewee feel like they are not able to express some word in English, the author encouraged that they could use Finnish word for it, and that is how it is going to be reported in this research - alongside the most equivalent translation in English that the author was able to find. The other interview was conducted in the Vietnamese language due to the participant's wish to use their mother tongue as it is believed to be the best way to fully express their thoughts and opinions. Translation into the English language was made by the author and was later used to gain an understanding of the interviewee’s perspective regarding the research topic.

Xian (2008) has identified three types of problem associated with translating interview data as: Linguistic – where there are “no equivalent words in the host language”, Social Cultural – refers to “local idioms or proverb that relies on social-historical” in which footnote is recommended to be used, and Methodological – not allowing silence to be

overlooked. Xian (2008) concludes: “Translating involves translator’s knowledge, social background, and personal experience.” The author has a proven background of intermediate fluency in both Vietnamese and English language.

In the process of preparing for the interview guide, the author was inspired by a suggestion from Lofland and Lofland (1995) regarding preparation:

“Just what about this thing is puzzle me?”

Keeping that in mind, the author did not just read the prepared questions and expect answers accordingly, yet rather immersed herself in the interview, treated it as an intellectually curious conversation with genuine interests in the topic. The author believes that it helps to break the ice from both sides - especially more crucial when it happens virtually, allowing the comfort and closeness so that the interviewees, hopefully, would feel more open to express their thoughts.

The questionnaire (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2) was designed with the focus in main research questions with sub-questions that are open-ended, explained in a comprehensible, relevant language that allows the interviewee to understand what is being asked and still have a vast room to express further. Name, age, and gender of interviewees were not revealed in respect of anonymity, job title and their companies name were mentioned, and interviewees are coded as interviewees 1-3. The inductive method was chosen to analyze the data, the author later interpreted and tried to identify repeated themes or topics and put them in their segments.

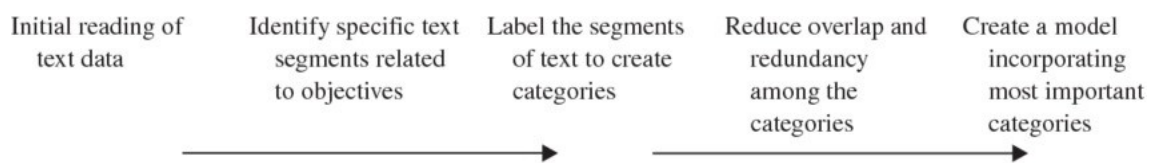


Figure 10 Coding Process (Thomas David, 2003)

3.3 Trustworthiness

It should be acknowledged that the amount of conducted participants in this research is at a limited number, therefore the author aimed not to generalize the research findings but to understand deeper and explore further the opinions and insights of these experts in Tour Operation in Finland and Vietnam. The author trusts that the participants have no reasons to give false information nor misleading answers rather than the kindness of contributing to a research study. Naturally, the author needed to try avoiding her own bias but somewhere along with the interviews, some human excitements and nervousness might have been sensed. The findings are without distortion and are solely based on the interviewee's responses. Usually, in the quantitative research method, trustworthiness is explained by and referred to as validity and credibility. However, qualitative research method, which is being used in this study, is naturally different. The data part which consists of data collection, data analysis, interview transcripts are to be available in an “accessible manner” (Bryman, 2008) to find out if the conclusions and findings are consistent and true to the raw data that had been collected. This gives the author valuable insight and well prepared for the presentation of the thesis itself.

4 RESULTS

In this chapter, the author presents what she learned from the interviews. Data were analyzed based on specific themes which came up from the materials. The interview questions were built loosely on the theory of destination personality. Speculation and prediction about possible post Covid19 Pandemic challenges and behaviors were subtly discussed. All of the interviewees have answered the interview questions with their insights, opinion and perception, common themes which were the combination of answers to different interview questions have arisen. They include Image of Vietnam: New and Potential, All-Inclusive-Resorts and the Interest of Vietnam among Finns, Challenges which include Flights, Thailand as a competitor and Government & DMOs lack of engagements.

4.1 Image of Vietnam: New and potential

A common factor that came up in all interviews was how new and potential Vietnam is. When interviewees were asked to give three words that describe their image of Vietnam as a travel destination (Q1), the words that came up were *Integrated, Attractive, Green, Colorful, Friendly, Kiehtova* (Fascinating), *Nature, Culture, Food*. It did not take much time for the interviewees to respond, and it is important and was encouraged by the author that they speak what comes first to their mind. Vietnam as a travel destination, from the interviewee's perspective, seems to be young, potential that can offer a diverse ray of tourism types:

"Vietnam has enough potential to become an ideal destination...Many types of tourism and not only limited to relaxing type of trip." (Interviewee 1)

"It's a very versatile and interesting country. It also offers very different opportunities for travelers. If you want a traditional beach relaxed holiday that is possible, but also if you want to see or experience the culture, so there is a, there's a lot to do and see." (Interviewee 2)

"Vietnam is considered as the new destination to European market... Not many people know Vietnam." (Interviewee 3)

Interviewee 3 has highlighted that though Vietnam is a new destination to Scandinavia/Nordic countries, Vietnam is not new to other parts of Europe such as France and England. However, the "newness" is not necessarily a negative aspect as interview 3 states *"people always want new destination. Viet Nam is one of them."* This thought was also shared by interviewee 2:

"It was a minus for people who wanted to go somewhere familiar and safe. But it was a plus for those people who wanted to go somewhere where everyone has not been yet. So, it's sort of a divided thing."

Harnessing the destination's newness is seen between interviewees when being ask for what type of Finnish tourists they target to promote their tour (Q3):

"When we market Viet Nam, I think we market it towards the younger" (Interviewee 2)

"In the future we will need to attack more young people, middle age people to come to Viet Nam." (Interviewee 3)

When asking further on whether there is an untapped market that would be interested in travelling to Vietnam (Q4), interviewee 1 gave a different approach regarding their company target, stating that they would be focusing on a more niche market such as Golfers, who have high income and are senior year of age. Golfing tours are provided which includes all-inclusive resorts where the tourists can stay the entire time of their trip in Viet Nam:

"Currently the standard type of tourists has already been dominated by big companies such as Aurinkomatka and TUI, we focus on other sectors, such as Golfing tour." (Interviewee 1)

Interviewee also stated the difficulty of attracting the tourists to come back after their first visit to Vietnam:

"...not difficult to bring them for the first time...the difficult is, to make them come back... many operators are selling only one tour. If they (the tourists, author) do one tour, they are not going back to the same thing" (Interviewee 3)

Overall, the interviewees expressed that Vietnam is a young, new destination with potential to become an ideal destination that can offer different type or tourism. Tour operators typically target to young to middle age Finnish experienced travelers who have not visited Vietnam before, there are also tour operators who might choose a different way of approach by targeting to a niche market which are not yet dominated by bigger companies. How to bring tourists back after their first visit is considered by interviewees as a challenge.

4.2 All-Inclusive-Resorts (AIRs) and the Interest of Viet Nam

When being asked how the interests of Vietnam among Finns (Q2) are, the answers came up immediately, without hesitation with the use of words such as *"absolutely interests"* (interviewee 1), *"definitely an interest"* (interviewee 2) and *"the interest has grown, all the time"* (interviewee 2). Interviewee 3 stated:

"The number of Finnish tourists coming to Vietnam is raising."

When being asked what Finnish tourists' expectations from a trip to Vietnam are in particular and South East Asia in general (Q7), *"beaches, weather, food, culture"* is a common answer among interviewees:

"Weather and beaches are number one expectation, good quality accommodation...food and culture are the next big thing, and...different nature experiences." (Interviewee 2)

The development of all-inclusive beach resorts that provide an inclusive stay and target to Western/European tourists seems to be on a rise in Vietnam, as they stated:

"Nowadays in Vietnam there are beach resorts area in which when they (Finnish tourists, author) arrive, they can just stay there for seven days and there is no need to go anywhere else" (Interviewee 1)

"They look for good quality hotels, good quality restaurants...Not luxury, but they want something a bit better when they travel further." (Interviewee 2)

"...recently we have some new resort in Quy Nhon, which is very new destination even for Vietnamese. And in Phu Quoc there are many new resorts also coming...like Six Senses or Amanoi or Four Seasons.... A lot of Europeans, Americans, they come, they stay only in these resorts." (interviewee 3)

The interviewee mentioned that Finnish tourist also highly expect "cleanliness, disease-free, familiarity and safety".

"Food Hygiene is one big concern. Secondly it is Cleanliness. Then it is Honesty." (Interviewee 1)

"Familiarity and the feeling of safety, those are the biggest factors." (Interview 2)

To summarize this theme, there has been growing interest in Vietnam as a destination for its *"Beaches, Weather, Food and Culture"*. The popularity of beach AIRs which provide inclusive stay with a high standard of hygiene and safety were commonly seen among interviewees answers, that confirms the destination's attribute are affected a great deal by

what the tourists are looking for. However, it is not clear yet whether the concept of AIRs could be an answer for the cultural aspect that the tourists seem to have in their lists of interests.

4.3 Challenges

When being asked what the difficulties or challenges are to promote Vietnam as a destination (Q9 and Q10), the repetition of these themes has come up among interviewees: Government & DMOs lack of engagement, Flights, Thailand.

4.3.1 Government & DMOs lack of engagement

Interviewee 3 responded to the question of what the difficulties or challenges are to promote destination Vietnam (Q9 and 10) in an instant, stating that the tourism board of Vietnam is "weak and does not know much about the market", then added that it is not the tour operators' job to promote the destination:

"We as companies cannot do the promotion for the country, or the destination. That is the mission of the country, of the Tourism Board... So, they have to be more professional, on all the international channels. And they have to organize more travel fairs...If Vietnam Tourism Board don't promote...if the tour operators don't know the destination, they are not selling."

The importance of the Vietnam Tourism Board and Vietnam Government Officials also reflects in Interviewee 1's opinion. Stating that "The Vietnam Embassy in Finland holds a very important factor in promoting tourism and culture." Interviewee 1 later added that on every January, Vietnamese Embassy in Finland joins Matka Nordic Travel Fair in Messukeskus and support small tour operators in Vietnam by providing a booth there for them to present advertisement materials such as brochure and travel vouchers. Interviewee 2 did not comment on the role of Vietnam's DMOs, however, has given an answer that relates to the travel fair that The Vietnam Embassy annually joins in January. For Finnish tourists, Vietnam might not be a destination to go to in Summer:

"We promote destinations at travel fair in January, kind of rolls towards the summer trips. Vietnam is not our summer destination at the fair."

(Interviewee 2)

4.3.2 Flights

Chicken-and-Egg is a metaphoric way of saying to describe a situation where it is almost impossible to tell which one is the causal. That might be applied in this situation of flights to Vietnam that was shared by the participants in this study. Though the majority has shared that there is indeed a flight problem which means there are not enough flights or any direct flight at all to the destination, one has shared that happens because there are not enough tourists coming. On the other hand, the other one stated that tourists are not coming much because there are not enough flights being operated:

"They open more flights when there are more travelers." (Interviewee 1)

"We can only sell the package if there is a flight coming" (Interviewee 3)

Besides the availability of flights, price, and duration of flights as factors were also brought up by interviewees:

"Direct flights are very important. If depart at the same time, let's say 6pm, one can arrive in Thailand already in the next morning, but for Vietnam they need to transit which could easily lead to 24 hours of waiting till arrival" (Interviewee 1)

"...if the flight again is very high compared to Thailand, or compared to Singapore, compared to Philippines. And the price of the package is higher than other countries. So why would they come to Vietnam when those are less expensive?" (Interviewee 3)

Interviewee 2 has not brought up flight as an obstacle, however, when being asked about whether it might be the case, the interviewee has given a more positive input:

"Nowadays I don't think so. It used to be that maybe 10 years ago. And nowadays, when people are quite used to traveling and you can easily travel with one change, then the direct flight is not the factor."

4.3.3 Thailand as a competitor

Even before being asked which destination could be considered Vietnam's competitor (Q8), Thailand was emphasized several times as an obvious competitor within South East Asia region by interviewees during the discussions. Here are the interviewees' direct responds to the question:

"I think Vietnam's direct competitor is Thailand. Share the border, but Thailand is way ahead, professional tourism development and diverse service. If we put it to comparison, Vietnam has similar scenery and nature attributes, Vietnam has a lot of beaches and potentials but do not know how to use it." (Interviewee 1)

Philippines and Indonesia were also mentioned, in addition to Thailand:

"...at least if we look from Finnish tour operators' view, I think the biggest competition is Thailand because that's very well-known and Finns are very familiar with it... Maybe also Indonesia... because it's so well known" (Interviewee 2)

"Thailand is cheap, much cheaper...and the quality of services is much better... Philippines is a new nation like Vietnam, but it's cheaper, and the beaches are more beautiful..." (Interviewee 3)

The author asked further on interviewees' opinion, what is it that makes Thailand - a destination that is right next to Vietnam and share similar tourism attributes - become such familiar among Finns, "flights" was mentioned again, alongside the long history of presence of the destination in Finland:

"Because Thailand has had a long time in Finland. Secondly, there are frequent flights to Thailand, every week. There is barely any commercial flight to Vietnam." (Interviewee 1)

"Thailand has been a tour operator destination for a very long time, for 20 or more years. So, that is why because we have charter flights there... That is probably the main reason."

Prediction about possible challenges arising post-Covid19 pandemic was subtly discussed. The interviewees emphasized different opinions that includes vaccination passports regulations could help the destination to attract more tourists for "the compulsory quarantine time when they arrive would be shorter" (Interviewee 1), how the destination has handled the pandemic situation was brought up as one of the first possible criteria, and the struggling of big tour operators might also be the opportunities for small to medium ones.

"I think the main factor after the pandemic will be the image that people have of the country, how they have come back from the pandemic, how they are handling all the health and safety things. For example, at the moment in the Finnish media there has been a lot of talk about Thailand and the fact that the situation there has been quite good... so I think with all countries after the pandemic, especially the long-haul destinations, that will be the biggest factor." (Interviewee 2)

"I think after the pandemic, the whole tourism industry will change...Big companies will need more time to recover... I think new companies that are more IT oriented, more (being) online, more young people, more dynamic... will win the market" (Interviewee 3)

To sum up, there seems to be a need for more official engagement - at least from the Vietnam Tourism Board and Vietnamese Embassy in Finland to strengthen Vietnam destination acknowledgment and tourism information in Finland. According to the interviewees, if the destination is not promoted, the demand or acknowledgment of the destination itself is low hence the tour operators cannot sell the tour. The accessibility and price of flights is a challenge, according to the interviewees, they play an important role in tourists' choice of destination. Thailand seems to be a direct competitor to Vietnam within the same region with its well-established presence in Finland, as well as well-developed tourism ecosystem.

5 DISCUSSIONS

This next chapter presents the discussion of qualitative research work and theoretical framework. Through in-depth interviews, the author gathers data to answer the main research questions of this study:

- What is the perception of Vietnam as a travel destination?
- What does Vietnam need to overcome to attract more Finnish tourists?

5.1 The perception of Vietnam

To answer the question about the perception of destination Vietnam among Finns, themes that came from the interviewees were *New, Young, Integrated, Attractive, Green, Colorful, Friendly, Kiehtova* (Fascinating) resonate with the author's expectation that food and nature seem to be big pull factors for tourists. Aaker (1997)'s Brand Personality Scale (BPS) which suggested using human analogy to a destination supports these finding by, categorizing the destination brand into five Elements: Sincerity (down to earth, family oriented, sincere, wholesome, original, cheerful, friendly), excitement (daring, exciting, spirited, imaginative, up to date, independent), competence (reliable, secure, intelligent, successful, confident, secure), sophistication (upper class, glamorous, good-looking), and ruggedness (outdoorsy, masculine, Western, tough, rugged), making it become not only a concept or a name anymore but rather a living thing with characteristics and traits. The empirical data confirms that Viet Nam could see herself belonging, but not limited, to *Sincerity* and *Excitement* categories.

Crompton (1979) stated that Push factors are considered important in initiating travel desire, while Pull factors are considered more decisive in explaining destination choice". Pull factors, which were described by Gnoth (1997) as the destination generated forces and the knowledge that tourists hold about a destination correspond to tourists' internal motives were reflected through the theme of "Beach, Weather, Culture, Food".

"Finland is cold. So, in the winter, people want to go to somewhere tropical."

"Finnish tourists usually prefer Beaches."

"Weather and beaches are number one expectation...food and culture are the next big thing, and...different nature experiences."

The Push and Pull theory support the empirical research as Pesonen, Komppula, Kronenberg and Peters (2011) have mentioned, what tourists are looking for affecting a great deal to what attributes that the destination's attributes.

"Nowadays in Vietnam there are beach resorts area in which when they (Finnish tourists) arrive, they can just stay there for 7 days and there is no need to go anywhere else" (Interviewee 1)

If we know Finnish tourists' expectations & internal motivation (push factors) are *"weather, beaches, culture and food"* we can evaluate Vietnam's attributes and from then developing a strategy to match these two. The seemed-to-be popular interest in beaches is an obvious push factor reflects in the raising supply of all-inclusive (beach) resorts - or also called as AIRs, it is described by Wong and Kwong (2004) as a "relatively effective and safe way for tourists to travel to distant countries with different cultures while avoiding unreliable transportation and questionable standards of hygiene". The focus on AIRs development shows that destination Vietnam seems to acknowledge these attributes, at the same time is harnessing and corresponding to them. However, it is still not clear if the *culture exploration* factor is satisfied.

In a normal world, one shall not and cannot be a "new" and "potential" (destination) forever. The potential needs to be harnessed, the newness should turn into interests, from there grows the familiarity and finally leads to visitors coming back to the destination. The return rate of tourists indicates the difficulty of bringing tourists back to Vietnam after their first visit that comes as a surprise to the author, and it is necessary to invest further on this matter in future research:

"Not difficult to bring them for the first time...the difficult is, to make them come back." (Interviewee 3)

5.2 Challenges & Opportunities

The second research question is about what Vietnam should overcome to attract more Finnish tourists. Wen and Huang (2019) have suggested that it is recommended for emerging destinations to "delineate different tourist's groups" and understand their travel motivation so that DMOs could "tailor strategies for specific tourist group" supports the fact that there are tour operators that typically target young to middle age Finnish experienced travelers "*who wants to go somewhere everyone has not been yet*", and there are other tour operators who see their opportunity in a niche market, which are not yet dominated by bigger companies. One may conclude that it is necessary for Vietnam to develop different attributes that support different groups of tourist, so that instead of asking how to attract more Finnish tourist in general, one might first ask oneself: Which specific type of Finnish tourists one wants to attract, which type of tourism one can provide well, and how to do that is to be the next question.

"Currently the standard type of tourists has already dominated by big companies (such as AurinkoMatkat and TUI), we focus on other sector such as Golfing tour. They (the customers) are around 50-60 years old; they combine business and leisure trip. They belong to higher income group, they are senior." (Interviewee 1)

Hooper (2014) stated that distance and price have frequently been identified as the major Pull factors affecting tourists' decision-making process, the empirical research supports this in a sense that the interviewees bring up the importance of frequent, direct, and affordable flights from Finland to Vietnam.

"...if the flight again is very high compared to Thailand... why would they come to Vietnam?" (Interviewee 3)

DMOs play an essential role in a destination's competitiveness and attractiveness (He, 2020). The importance of the Vietnam Tourism Board and Vietnam Government Officials also reflects in the interviewee's opinion. stating that "The Vietnam Embassy in Finland holds a very important factor in promoting tourism and culture." One might conclude that if the destination is not promoted, the demand or acknowledgment of the destination itself is low and the tour operators cannot sell or promote the destination.

That leads to lesser availability of flights and an increase in the price of available flights - making it more competitive for Vietnam when compared to other destinations, such as Thailand - which is already a more well-known destination with a more advanced tourism ecosystem that routinely offers charter flights with a significantly lower fare.

"Safety", more than ever, would become the top attribute is another theme presented in the interviews. The interviews place emphasis on the fact that how destinations handling all the health and safety issues during the global pandemic makes an impact on Tourists' destination selection. The fear of contracting this new disease will subconsciously be in future tourist's mindset, and it could be possible that our very human's survivor instinct might come back stronger than ever to protect ourselves, hence also affecting our travel behaviors and leads to "less adventurous" near generation of tourists and tourism industry. (Kock et al.,2020).

5.3 Limitations of the study

Because of the limitation in time, the author, unfortunately, could not conduct the study with a bigger sample. However, these samples might indicate opinions of a bigger group of participants and the author believes it would be interesting to study more opinions on the research questions. It is also necessary to acknowledge that even though the author has tried to be as objective and avoid her own bias as possible, there is still a chance that the author has interpreted or translated the results through her perspective.

5.4 Suggestions for future research

Themes that the authors could suggest investigating further: the return rate of tourists to a destination and how to optimize it, the concept of All-Inclusive-Resorts with its pros and cons. It would also be interesting to study the perceived destination personalities of different countries with a mixed research method study, quantitative would certainly add more credibility and a clearer result. The author recommends conducting the study with a bigger pool of samples and more relevant theories on the topic.

6 CONCLUSIONS

This thesis aims to answer its main research questions, what are the perceptions of Vietnam as a travel destination, and what are challenges Vietnam need to overcome to attract more Finnish tourist. This study was conducted with a qualitative research method, a total of three tour operators in Vietnam and Finland were interviewed. Destination personalities and push & pull factors theories were studied through different interview questions.

Based on the results of this study, one can conclude that there has been a growing interest in Vietnam among Finns. Vietnam is seen among Finnish travelers as a young and new destination with the biggest pull factors are its nature (beach in particular), weather, food, and culture. The popularity of beach AIRs which provide inclusive stay with a high standard of hygiene and safety were commonly seen among interviewees answers, that confirms the destination's attributes are affected a great deal by what the tourists are looking for. Improvements and efforts need to be made by the destination's governments and DMOs regarding its accessibility (such as the frequency, length, and price of flights) and development of tourism (to develop different attributes that cater to the needs of different groups of tourist) to be able to compete with its neighbor - a well-established travel destination Thailand. The author recommends future research to study further on Vietnam's return rate of tourists and how to optimize it. The author also suggests future exploration on the concept of AIRs in Vietnam.

At the time this thesis was being written, the world is going through a global pandemic that put a sad pause on the entire tourism industry, it might as well cast a change in tourist behaviors later. Safety will be the keyword, and how the destinations face pandemic situations is to be a significant attribute when tourists make their choice of destination. One might also see this as an opportunity to balance out the tourism dynamic - if one happens to be a destination that manages well in a pandemic and emphasis on the safety attributes. The author would like to finish this paper with a quote by Kock et al. (2020):

"The pandemic would eventually fade, and travel barriers will be lifted, yet some tourists' psyches will likely settle on a new equilibrium."

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Interview questions in English

1. What is your personal image of Vietnam as a tourist destination?
2. If you need to describe Vietnam in 3 adjectives, what would they be?
3. How are (and have been) the interests of Vietnam among Finns?
4. What are your target markets? (what type of Finns usually buy trips to Vietnam - age, income, demographic, and travel preferences...)
5. Is there an untapped market among Finns that would be interested in traveling Vietnam?
6. What is the most popular kind of tour package that you offer to Finns visiting Vietnam?
7. Which cities are you offering the tour and any untapped cities in Vietnam that you are considering design a tour for Finns (and why)?
8. What is expectation of Finns in general when they want to go to South East Asia?
9. What are the top regional competitors of Vietnam? And why.
10. What were the difficulties of promoting/selling Vietnam as a destination before the pandemic? In your opinions, how do Vietnam tackle those challenges?
11. What are the difficulties of promoting/selling Vietnam as a destination after this pandemic? In your opinions, how do Vietnam tackle those challenges?
12. What can DMOs in Vietnam do to become a more appealing choices for Finns?

Appendix 2. Interview questions in Vietnamese

1. Anh nghĩ sao về Việt Nam - 1 điểm đến du lịch? Nếu phải dùng 3 tính từ để miêu tả du lịch Việt Nam, anh sẽ dùng những từ nào?
2. Theo anh, nhu cầu của khách Phần Lan về du lịch Việt Nam ra sao?
3. Anh thường nhắm đến đối tượng nào ở Phần Lan để quảng bá tour du lịch Việt Nam? Khách hàng Phần Lan đã dùng dịch vụ của công ty anh - họ là những người như thế nào? (độ tuổi, mức thu nhập...vân vân...)
4. Ngoài những đối tượng trên, anh có dự định nhắm đến những đối tượng nào khác để quảng bá du lịch Việt nam không?
5. Những gói tour mà khách Phần thường đặt nhất từ công ty mình trông như thế nào (bao gồm những gì) ạ?
6. Những điểm đến/tỉnh thành nào ở Việt Nam mà công ty mình đang có dịch vụ đưa khách Phần về, và anh có đang nhắm tới những tỉnh thành nào khác để khai thác tour ko?
7. Người Phần Lan khi muốn đi Đông Nam Á để du lịch, thường họ có những mong đợi gì?
8. Theo anh, đối thủ của du lịch Việt Nam trong cùng khu vực là những nước nào, và tại sao?
9. Trước dịch Corona, việc quảng bá tour du lịch VN ở Phần Lan có những trở ngại gì? Theo anh, làm sao để vượt qua những trở ngại đó?
10. Sau này khi dịch Corona qua đi và du lịch phục hồi, anh dự đoán việc quảng bá tour du lịch Việt Nam sẽ có những trở ngại gì? Và chúng ta có thể làm gì để vượt qua được những chướng ngại đó?
11. Nền du lịch Việt nam có thể làm gì để hình ảnh du lịch Việt nam được nổi trội hơn trong mắt khách Phần Lan?

Appendix 3. Consent form

Consent Form How Vietnam as a travel destination is perceived in Finland.

Contact Information of Researcher:

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- I have read the provided Information about the Research and been given adequate time to consider it.
- I understand that my participation in the Study is voluntary.
- I understand that taking part in the Study will involve me being interviewed and I agree to this interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that my personal details such as name and employer will not be revealed to people outside the project.
- I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, but data collected about me during the Study will be anonymized before it is submitted for publication.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the Study at any time, and I will not be asked any questions about why I no longer want to take part.
- I understand that If I withdraw from the Study my data will not be used.

Name of participant: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of researcher: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 4. Collecting and coding of themes

Image & Interests of Vietnam	<p>Interests 1</p> <p>Vietnam has enough potential to become an ideal destination. Many types of tourism and not only limited to relaxing types of trip.</p> <p>Integrated, Attractive, Green</p> <p>There are absolutely interests. They expect cleanliness and disaster-free food hygiene is one big concern. Secondly it is Cleanliness. Finnish tourists usually prefer Backstays.</p>	<p>Interests 2</p> <p>It's a very versatile and interesting country, different opportunities for travelers traditional beach relaxed holiday that's possible, see more experiences the culture there's a lot to do.</p> <p>It was a minus for those people who wanted to go somewhere familiar and safe. But it was a plus for those people who wanted to go somewhere where everyone has not been yet. So it's sort of a divided thing</p> <p>Colorful, Friendly, Krinkos</p> <p>Weather and beaches are the number one, expectations, good quality accommodation is one food and culture is the next big thing, and maybe now more and more different nature experiences</p> <p>They look for good hotel, good quality beach, good quality restaurants, and they are willing to spend a bit more money also willing to spend a bit more money in the destination.</p> <p>Not luxury, but they want something a bit better when they travel further.</p>	<p>Interests 3</p> <p>Vietnam is considered as the new destination to European market. Many operators in Europe. They are selling only that tour. If they do one tour. They are not going back to the same thing.</p> <p>Masters, Culture, Food</p> <p>The number of Finnish tourists coming to Vietnam is raising. In the winter, most of people want to go to the tropical. Not many people know Vietnam. So people are curious to know Vietnam, most people come to Thailand, people want always want the new destination, Vietnam is one of them.</p>
All inclusive resorts	<p>Areas such as Phu Thiet, Phu Thiet (former beach area) was an easily great someone speaking Finnish because on the street. When they go on a golf tour, they will go for 2 weeks to one month, they would stay that whole time at a same place. For example they base in Saigon. There they can find anything they need, and from there they can take day trip to Vung Tau, Phu Thiet, Thu Duc, Dong Nai, nearby area. Go and come back on the same day.</p> <p>Nowadays in Vietnam there are beach resorts area in which when they (Finnish tourists) arrive, they can just stay there for 7 days and there is no need to go anywhere else.</p>	<p>Nowadays when people are quite used to traveling and you can easily travel with, with one change, that the direct flight is not their factor.</p>	<p>People arrive in the North, spend a couple of days in the North, to visit Ho Long Bay, Hanoi, maybe. Stay and then they go to the Coast like Da Nang, Hue, Ho Chi Minh, and then they go to the South, they go to the beach like Phu Quoc or Phu Thiet as a traditional tour package that is about the people for the first time coming to Viet Nam, but to bring them back they would not do the same for the second time. So to bring them back, provide the light highland two week holidays in a resort in Phu Quoc or Phu Thiet</p> <p>Quy Mon and some new resort in Quy Nhon, very new destination even for Vietnamese. And in Phu Quoc there are many new resorts also coming, there are some but three resorts like Six Senses or Amanoi or Four Seasons, they coming they stay only in these resorts.</p>
FLIGHT	<p>there are frequent flights to Thailand, every week. For Vietnam, charter flight is only available from Berlin to BKK. And there are barely any commercial flight.</p> <p>There are more travelers 5-6 years ago they (Finnish) has a month of direct flight to Hanoi, but that's it.</p> <p>when they go far away they would choose Thailand, because there are direct flights. Direct flights are very important. If depart at the same time, let's say 6pm, one can arrive in Thailand already in the morning, but for Vietnam they need to transit and all kind of waiting that comes with it, it ruins the mood.</p>	<p>Weather and beaches are the number one, expectations, good quality accommodation is one food and culture is the next big thing, and maybe now more and more different nature experiences</p>	<p>Need more flight coming to Vietnam, can only sell the package, if there is a flight coming, easy for people to buy flight, because a flight again is very high compare to Thailand, or compare to Singapore compare to Philippines, and the price of the package is higher than other countries. So why did they come to Vietnam when those are less expensive.</p>
Thailand	<p>Vietnam's direct competitor is Thailand. Share the border, but Thailand is way ahead, diverse service, more attractions, better infrastructure, better service, better security and nature attributes. Vietnam has a lot of beaches and beautiful but do not know how to work it. Thailand has had a long time in Finland.</p>	<p>Biggest competition is Thailand because that's very well known that Finns are very interested in Thailand. The other competitors are Myanmar, Cambodia. Thailand has been a tour operator destination for a very long time, for 20 or more years.</p>	<p>Thailand is cheap, cheaper, much cheaper, much cheaper, and the quality of services is much better, and Philippines is a competitor for Thailand. But the price of the package is higher than other countries. So why did they come to Thailand to Vietnam. For the first time, the difficult is, to make them come back. That is the difficulty.</p>
Government & DMOs	<p>Messengers in Puzila in January, to save cost they ask for help from Vietnam Embassy in Finland. And then others agencies from Vietnam also send their brochure here to place at Embassy's booth. need to have decent tourism information in Finnish language.</p> <p>Vietnam Tourism Board can do a campaign, advertise Vietnam here. The Vietnam embassy holder a very important factor in Vietnam and culture.</p>	<p>Apollo Market traditionally go to, to the travel fair and promote all travel fair is in January, kind of rolls towards the summer trips. Vietnam is not summer destination.</p>	<p>the tourism board of Vietnam is weak, don't know much about the market so much. companies we cannot do the promotion for the country, or the destination. That is the mission of the country, or the Tourism Board.</p> <p>if Vietnam Tourism Board don't promote, that (tour operator) is not calling Vietnam.</p> <p>if the tour operator they don't know the destination they are not selling.</p>
Post-Pandemic expectation	<p>Vaccination might also be a factor. If they have been vaccinated, the compulsory quarantine time, when they arrive, would be shorter after corona there will be many challenges. Finnish tourist would like visit European destinations. A weekend trip.</p>	<p>Most factor after the pandemic will be the image that people have of the different countries how they have come back from the pandemic how they are handling all the health and safety things. For example, at the moment in the Finnish media there's been a lot of talk about Thailand and the fact that the situation there has been quite good. Health and safety issues are really well taken care of, all countries after the pandemic, especially the long haul destinations are a bit more unknown destinations. That will be the biggest factor, the familiarity and the feeling of safety</p>	<p>after a corona most of the big companies are struggling, or even down this is the opportunity for owners of smaller companies who are more dynamic. The whole tourism industry will change. Big companies will need more time to recover, to bring back the tour they already buy, all the new companies, more young people who are more dynamic will win the market.</p>